

B.C. falling short on climate goals; LNG projects present new threat, review of provincial plan warns

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Body

B.C. needs to "recalibrate" its approach to climate action and have a serious conversation about how expanding liquefied natural gas fits into the province's goals of reducing emissions, according to an independent review of the government's CleanBC plan.

Introduced in 2018, CleanBC sets out a strategy for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 40 per cent below 2007 levels by 2030 through various initiatives targeting transportation, buildings and industry.

Merran Smith, founder and chief innovation officer of Clean Energy Canada, and Dan Woynillowicz, a principal at Polaris Strategy, spent six months reviewing the plan. In their report released Wednesday, the pair said B.C. is only halfway to meeting its 2030 target.

The authors argued the ambitious nature of the target was counterproductive as it has produced a negative reaction among some British Columbians due to the cost of the policies, including the carbon tax and the mandate that all new light-duty vehicle sales be zero-emission by 2035.

Instead, they said the government should focus on setting realistic targets and communicating better with the public, both in combating the misinformation swirling around technologies such as electric vehicles and the positives that have come from climate action, such as reduced heating and fuelling costs.

"These policies are working. Some of them take time, and our advice is really extend and strengthen some of these ones that are working," Smith told reporters.

The report lays out 80 recommendations for the B.C. government, ranging from a more aggressive approach to getting clean energy projects, such as solar, wind and hydro, built, to bringing back the rebate for electric vehicles.

Smith and Woynillowicz cited examples of how the plan is working. B.C. saw a 60 per cent reduction in methane pollution between 2018 and 2022 and has surpassed the goal of having 220,000 electric vehicles on the road. Heat pump installations now outpace the purchase of new gas furnaces. But there was also some criticism from the authors around the government's expansion of LNG. While the expansion of natural gas projects could bring billions of dollars of investment to the province and create thousands of jobs, it could also put many of the government's targets for emissions reductions further out of reach and require 71/2 Site C Dams worth of electricity, they said.

The report points out that any emissions from LNG would work to negate emissions reductions in other sectors and that, unlike some countries such as Norway, B.C. doesn't have a way to ensure fossil fuel royalties can be funnelled back into installing clean technology and diversifying the economy. "I think the math of emissions associated with

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new LNG projects is inescapable. Emissions would go up in that sector at the same time that we're making progress in reducing emissions in other sectors, and that means the sum total of that is emissions provincially would not be going down to the same extent or could be actually going up," said Woynillowicz.

Smith added that "there's no certainty that B.C.'s LNG is going to lead to global emissions from some other country reducing their emissions by using it."

The authors also pointed out the province's failure to implement policies around active transportation and transit.

"The policies that aren't working are mostly the policies that never got enacted. We were supposed to have a clean transportation action plan. We don't have one. We were supposed to have a cap on the gas utility emission. We don't have one," Smith said. "It's like saying, 'I'm going to go on a diet and I'm going to lose 40 pounds' and then not putting in place the plan to do it or only doing half of what you said you were going to do. Of course you're not going to make it."

Energy Minister Adrian Dix said Wednesday that the provincial government knows it needs to do more to combat climate change.

"We accept the criticism, and the intention of the report was to build momentum and continue to make CleanBC better. Better for the economy, because clean policies and climate action is good for the economy, better for affordability and better for emissions reduction," he said. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2025 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Graphic

Government of B.C.; LNG projects could generate billions of dollars and create thousands of jobs, an independent review of the CleanBC plan says, but they will put the province's emission-reduction targets out of reach.;

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